

AN ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE APPROACH TOWARD RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE: An All-Terrain Vehicle Approach Toward Rural Economic Development

ABSTRACT: The 1990 Recommended Resource Planning Act (RPA) recognizes that one role of the Forest Service is to contribute to rural development. The future role of the agency will be to increase efforts contributing to healthy rural economies.

One method would remove administrative boundaries between the Forest Service and other agencies and work toward accomplishing a project that assists in the economic development of a community.

The All-Terrain Vehicle Trail System will provide an opportunity for communities to increase their revenues through increased tourism. Such a system can stimulate interest from local, regional, national, and international tourism industries. The system will cross agency boundaries and provide public access to National Forest Lands by a designated trail system with the communities and attractions serving as trailheads. The purpose of this paper is to identify the feasibility and benefit of such a system.

KEY WORDS: Off-highway vehicle, All-terrain vehicle, Rural Economic Development, Tourism

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The 1990 Resources Planning Act (RPA) recognizes one of the roles of the Forest Service is to contribute to rural development. A future role of the agency will be to increase efforts contributing to healthy local economies in rural communities. The agency will give special attention to resource programs that help diversify those economies.

Opportunities exist to benefit rural communities in southcentral Idaho, northern Utah and northeastern Nevada by designating an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) system to link towns and attractions. This system would create an opportunity for communities to increase their tourism base and associated revenues.

Existing roads and trails on lands administered by the Sawtooth National Forest (SNF), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the National Park Service (NPS), three states, six counties, and numerous highway districts could be involved.

The project area encompasses 5,000 square miles from Twin Falls east to Rockland, Idaho; south to Snowville, Utah; west to Jackpot, Nevada; and north to Salmon Falls Reservoir and Nat-Soo-Pah Warm-springs RV Park. Within this area are the Twin Falls and Burley Ranger Districts of the Sawtooth National Forest. The Twin Falls District has the Cassia Division. The Burley District contains four divisions: the Albion, Black Pine, Raft River (Utah), and Sublett Divisions. All are separated by lands administered by the BLM, state, and local governments.

The towns and attractions surrounding these divisions could sponsor trailheads, allowing public access to the National Forest on approved county roads. More than 400 miles of ATV routes could be available with portions constructed or relocated to create a better route.

All counties contain a large share of Federal land. This vast federal ownership results in a degree of dependency, at the county level, on Sawtooth National Forest management decisions. Due to the dispersed nature of the population within any county, the significant levels of dependency are between the Forest and individual communities.

The Sawtooth National Forest Land Management Plan recognizes the use of motor vehicles off Forest development roads as a legitimate use. The Twin Falls and Burley Ranger Districts currently have over 500,000 acres open to off-highway vehicle use with over 1,200 miles of road and trails. The Bureau of Land Management areas are generally open.

ATV interest has accelerated due to versatility of use for the general public, adaptation for racing, and in law enforcement activities.

The economic value of use in the retail market is significant. The estimated retail market is approximately \$3.4 billion annually. Although the retail market for OHV use is enormous, the benefits of this use to the rural communities can be difficult to determine.

The economic effects of outdoor recreation on rural economies are measured as direct, indirect, and induced business effects of recreational spending.

The direct and indirect effects account for the first and subsequent rounds of input purchases made in order to support firms which directly provide recreational visitors with goods and services.

Direct effects are purchases of gasoline, food, and other commodities from local service outlets. They in turn must purchase additional supplies from wholesalers.

The indirect effects provide for increased input purchases made to meet the increased demand for goods and services caused by expanded household income in the rural economy. The economic activities stimulated by the multiple-round purchasing are the indirect effects of this recreational spending.

The direct and indirect effects of recreational spending result in an overall increase in the production of goods and services in a rural area. This increase could result in increased employment and household income. Increase in household income would then increase consumer goods and service. This economic activity caused by increased consumer purchases is the induced effect of recreational spending.

The above effects do not necessarily contribute to the national economy. However, they do contribute to regional economic development and may meet welfare distribution objectives related to redistribution of income to economically depressed rural areas.

The purpose of this paper is to determine if an ATV trail system is feasible and to evaluate its benefit to rural communities.

Meetings and discussions to examine the feasibility of such a system were held with representatives from the Forest Service; the Burley, Elko, and Salt Lake Districts of the Bureau of Land Management; and the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.

Additional contacts were made with the Twin Falls and Cassia County Commissioners, Idaho State Fish and Game, General Accounting Office representatives during their review of off-highway vehicle use on the Sawtooth National Forest, Sawtooth National Forest Recreation Staff, Sevier County (Utah) Economic Development Office, Sevier County Travel Council, Fremont Indian State Park, Region IV (Idaho) Recreation Forum, and various users. Background information was also obtained from various publications.

This system could appeal to the local, regional, national, and international tourism industry and provide opportunities for rural communities to increase revenues through increased tourism.

Several towns could be designated as trailheads within the 5,000 square mile project area. As a minimum, these locations should provide fuel and food. The Idaho cities of Burley and Twin Falls; Jackpot, Nevada; and Snowville, Utah, could provide full service.

An ATV System would be beneficial to local rural economies in southern Idaho, northern Utah and Nevada. Increased tourism would create increased revenues through direct, indirect, and induced recreation spending. Economic, social, and resource benefits would be created for the rural communities and agencies.

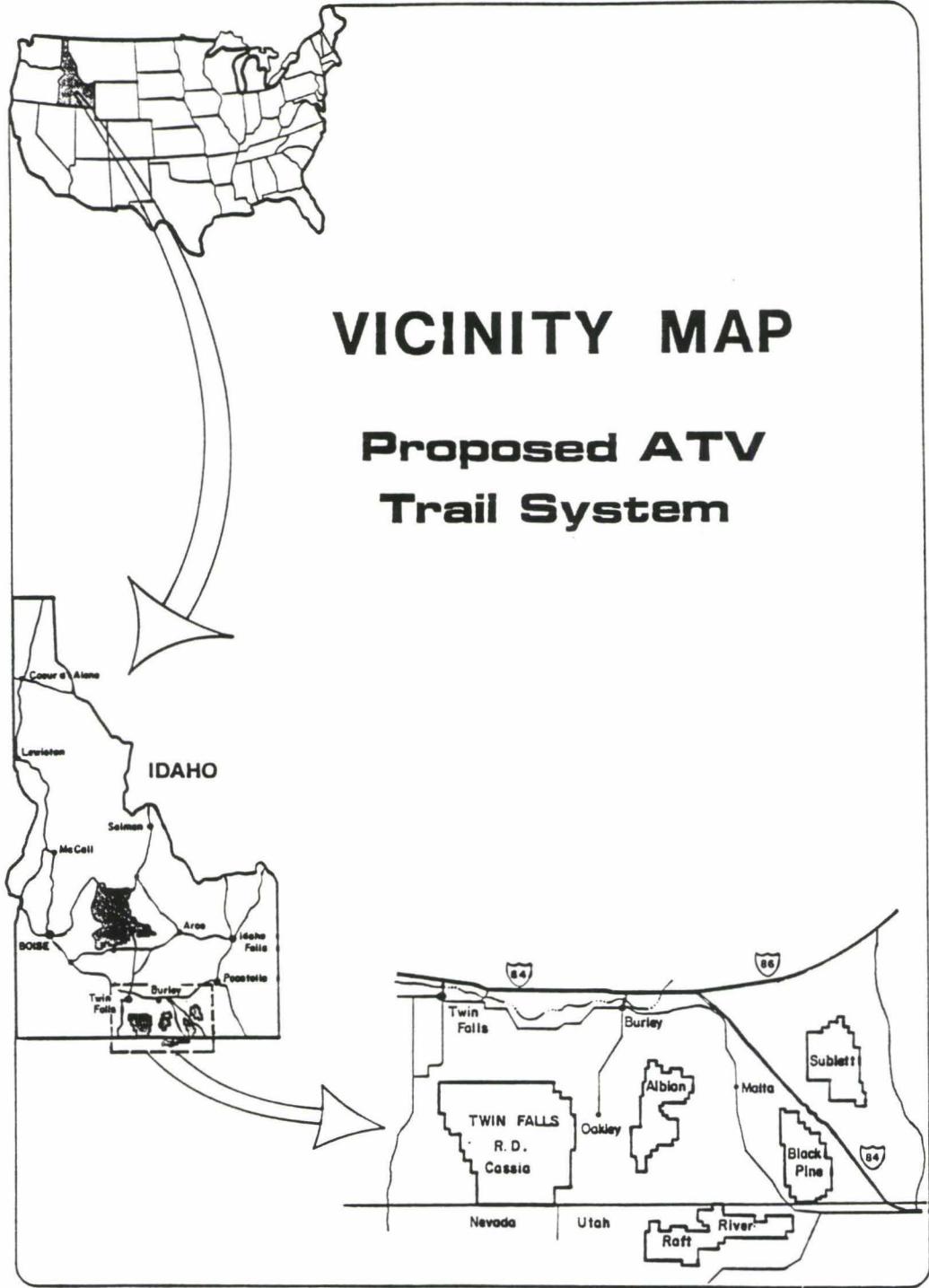
An All-Terrain Vehicle Approach Toward Rural Economic Development

I. Introduction

The demand for all recreational activities is expected to increase for the next 50 years. The 1990 Recommended Resources Planning Act (RPA) states partnerships with organizations and individuals will be used to expand recreational capabilities (USDA Forest Service, 1990). The RPA program suggests one of the roles of the Forest Service is to contribute to rural development. The future role of the agency will be to increase efforts contributing to healthy local economies in rural communities. The agency will give special attention to resource programs that help diversify those economies. (USDA Forest Service, 1990).

In September 1992, efforts were initiated to help diversify economies. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Army, National Park Service (NPS), and the United States Tourism and Travel Administration to work together in developing and distributing information about tourism and travel opportunities on federal lands (USDA Forest Service, 1992).

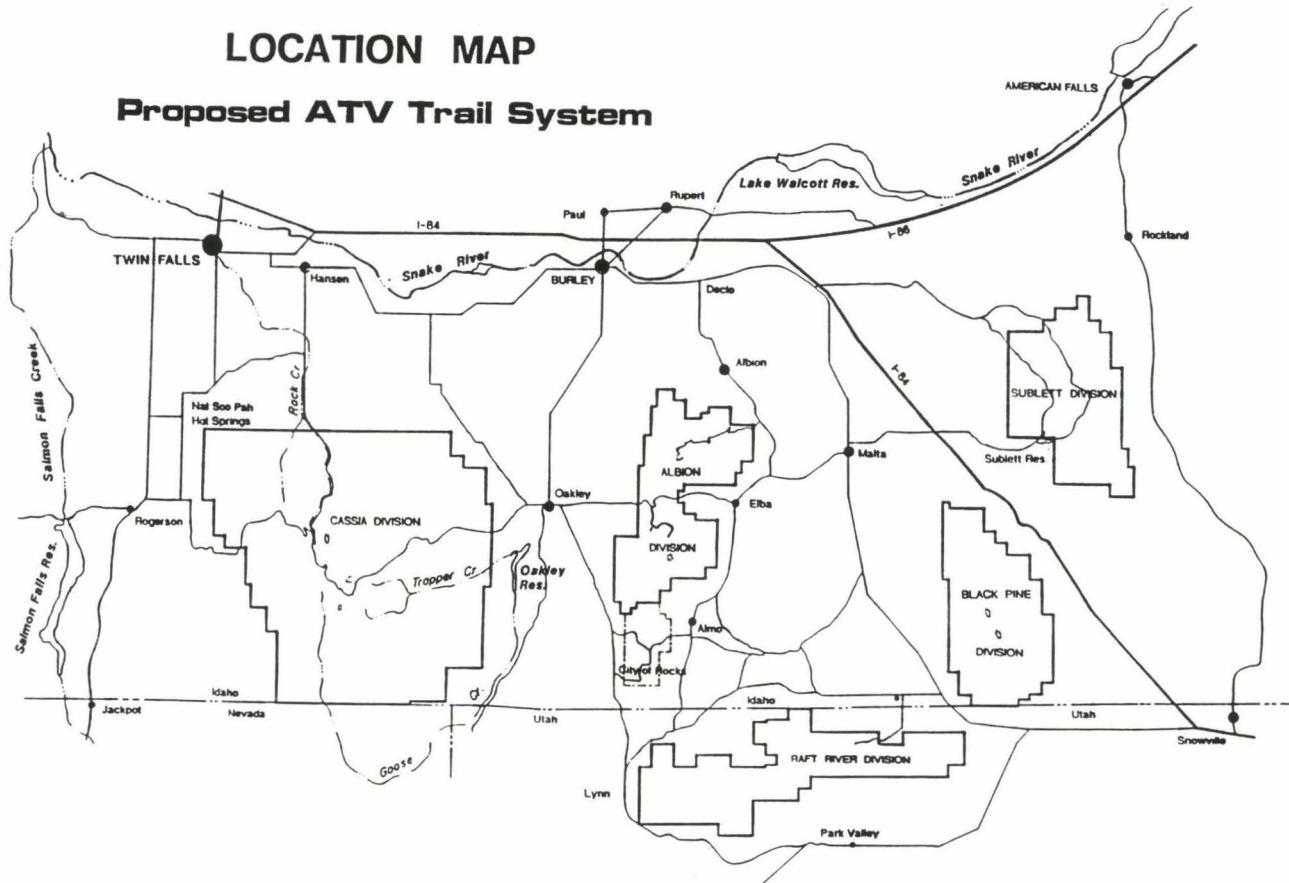
Opportunities exist to benefit rural communities in southcentral Idaho, northern Utah and northeastern Nevada (Figure 1) by designating an All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Trail System to link towns and attractions. This system would create an opportunity for communities to increase their tourism base and associated revenue.



(Figure 1)

Existing roads and trails on lands administered by the Sawtooth National Forest, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, three states, six counties, and numerous highway districts could be involved.

The project area encompasses 5,000 square miles from Twin Falls east to Rockland, Idaho; south to Snowville, Utah; west to Jackpot, Nevada; and north to Salmon Falls Reservoir and Nat-Soo-Pah Warm-springs RV Park (Figure 2). Within this area are the Twin Falls and Burley Ranger Districts (South End) of the Sawtooth National Forest. Twin Falls District is comprised of the Cassia Division. The Burley District contains four divisions: the Albion, Black Pine, Raft River (Utah), and Sublett Divisions. All are separated by lands administered by the BLM, state, or local governments.



(Figure 2)

The towns and attractions surrounding these divisions would serve as trailheads, allowing people to access the National Forest on approved county roads without loading and unloading their machines. More than 400 miles of ATV routes could be available with portions constructed or relocated to create a more environmentally favorable or appealing route. This paper will discuss the feasibility and benefits of this trail system. The area of consideration occurs in two physiographic provinces. These include the Columbia Plateau and the Basin and Range Provinces. Elevations on the forest range from 4,500 feet at Rock Creek on the Twin Falls District to 10,339 feet at Cache Peak on Burley District. The area is characterized by broad stretches of flat to rolling semi-arid plains interspersed with shallow to deep canyons, high-elevation desert plateaus, and infrequent mountain ranges. This provides a wide spectrum of recreation opportunities.

The Zone of Influence for the Sawtooth National Forest includes Cassia, Twin Falls, Oneida, and Power Counties in Idaho, and Box Elder County in Utah. Elko County, Nevada would also be a major contributor in this system. It has the entertainment center of Jackpot, Nevada.

Most of the Idaho counties within this zone have only two or three incorporated cities, but 43% of the residents live within city boundaries. In Box Elder County, 82% are residents of 17 cities. Many of these are towns with populations of less than 2,500 and are classified as "rural" by census criteria. Fifty percent of the total zone residents live in rural areas.

All counties contain a large share of land administered by the federal government. This large federal ownership results in a degree of dependency, at the county level, on Sawtooth National Forest management decisions. Due to the dispersed nature of the population within any county, the significant levels of dependency are between the forest and individual communities (SNF LMP 1987).

II. Literature Search

Federal Regulations

The Sawtooth National Forest Land Management Plan recognizes the use of motor vehicles off forest development roads as a legitimate use. The Twin Falls and Burley Ranger Districts currently have over 500,000 acres open to off-highway vehicle use with over 1,200 miles of road and trails. The BLM management areas are generally open.

The planning and designation of trails should provide vehicle management direction aimed at resource protection, public safety of all users, minimizing conflicts among users, and provide for diverse use and benefits of the forest. Trails should be located to avoid damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, or other resources of the public lands, and need to be located to prevent harassment of wildlife or significant disruption of wildlife habitat. Also, they need to be located to minimize conflicts between off-highway vehicle use, and other existing or proposed recreational uses of the same or neighboring public lands. They should ensure the compatibility of such uses with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account noise and other factors (36 CFR 295.2).

The Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service federal regulations prohibit the operation of any vehicle off agency development roads, state or county roads in violation of State law established for vehicles used off roads (36 CFR 261.13 i; 36 CFR 4.2 and 43 CFR 8341.1 (d)).

State Regulations

Determination of any major inconsistencies between off-highway vehicle use, specifically ATV use, among the states was needed. State laws dealing with ATV use vary from highly regulatory statutes in Utah to limited statutes in Idaho and Nevada.

There is a difference between statutes in the length of time users may keep their recreation vehicles in adjacent states without registering. Residents of other states visiting Idaho may keep their ATV's in Idaho for 30 days without having to register them. Utah allows nonresidents only 14 days before requiring registration. Nevada Traffic Code does not require any registration of the vehicle as long as current registration exists in the operator's home state (Nevada, Utah, and Idaho Criminal and Traffic Law Manuals, 1992).

As an example of specific statutes identified for use, Utah acknowledges three age groups in relation to operating an ATV:

- No one under 8 years of age may operate an ATV on public roads, trails, or lands.
- Drivers between the ages of eight and fifteen must possess an off-highway vehicle (OHV) education certificate issued by the Utah Division of Parks and Recreation. Drivers in this bracket must also wear a helmet and be accompanied and supervised by an adult driver riding an ATV.

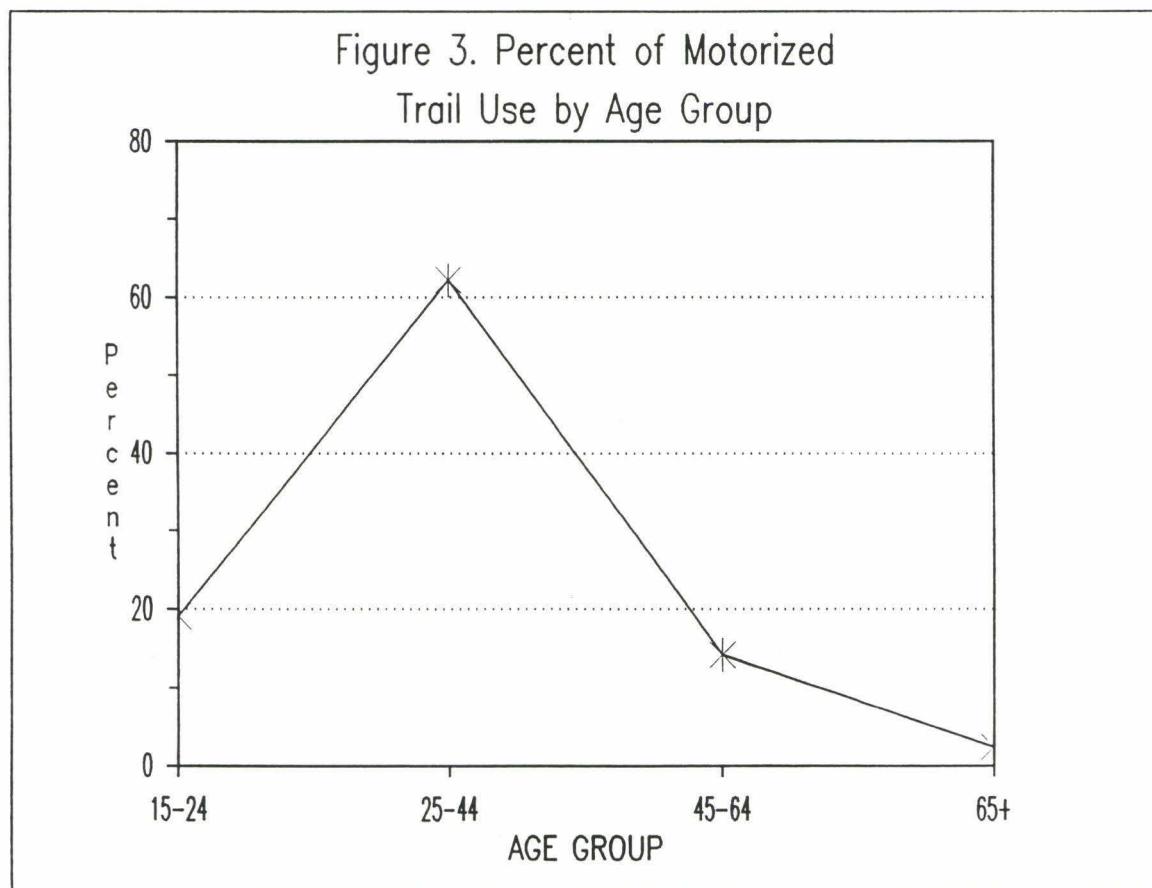
- The legal driving age in Utah is sixteen. ATV drivers sixteen and older must possess a valid drivers license or an OHV education certificate.

Motorized Trail User Profile

The CUSTOMER research project surveyed recreation visitors through a combination of on-site interviews and mail-back questionnaires during the summer of 1990. The following demographics were identified for motorized trail users on the Burley and Twin Falls Ranger Districts:

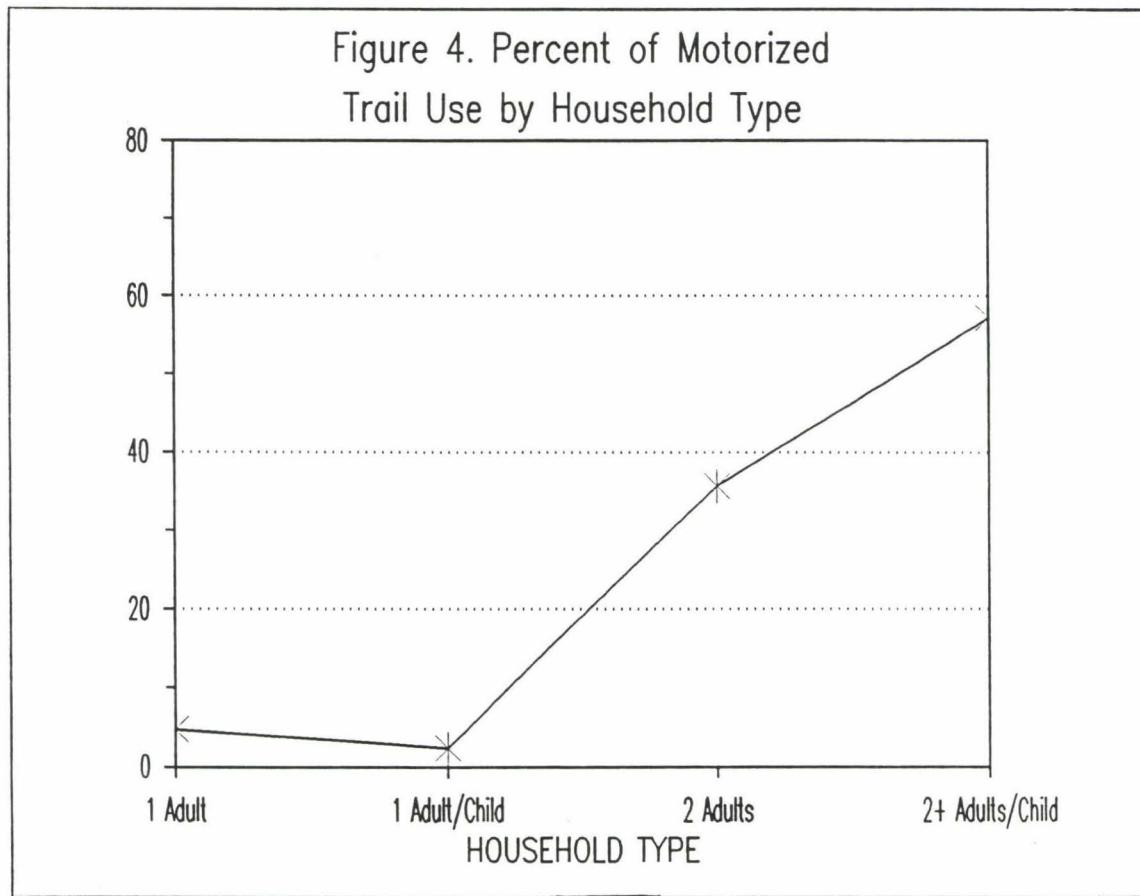
- Ninety-three percent of the users were repeat visitors
- Over sixty percent visited the districts more than five times per year
- Eighty percent of the users resided from between twenty-five and fifty miles away
- Over seventy percent considered themselves as family members and only twelve percent travelled alone

The visitor age groups were 19.1% in the 15-24 age bracket, 62.0% in the 25-44 age bracket, 14.2% in the 45-64 age bracket, and 2.4% in the 65 or older age bracket (Figure 3).



(Figure 3)

The household type included the following: 1 adult - 4.8 percent; 1 adult and children - 2.4 percent; 2 adults or more - 35.7 percent; 2+ adults and children - 57.2 percent (Figure 4).



(Figure 4)

The three primary reasons for visiting the forest were scenic beauty (88%), convenient location (81%), and to see a certain object (67%).

Forty percent of Idahoans participate in OHV driving activities. Twenty-two percent participate in four-wheel drive recreation, 16.7% ride motorcycles off-highway and 13.0% use ATV's (Idaho Department Parks and Recreation, 1993). Idaho has the second largest concentration of off-highway motorcycles and ATV's in the United States with 4.3 motorcycles/ATV's per hundred people.

OHV recreationists tend to have their destinations in their own regions. The east and south portions of Idaho are destinations for 80% of OHV recreationists. The east, southeast, and southcentral Idaho are travel-out-of-region destinations (Idaho Department Parks and Recreation, 1993).

A survey conducted for the Utah Department of Parks and Recreation found that 78% of OHV users have two or more dependents. The report also stated that OHV activities are a family hobby that helps to keep their

families together. Some respondents stated that it keeps the children involved in the home and out of mischief.

Economic Value

All-Terrain Vehicle use has accelerated due to versatility of use for the general public, adaptation for racing, and in law enforcement activities (Marsh 1987). The Sevier County Travel Council in Utah, identified the primary users of the Piute ATV Trail as retirees and families. Many retirees have expressed interest in such a trail system. Many who can no longer walk well, still want access to the National Forest and the more primitive areas of the districts.

The economic value of use in the retail market is significant. The estimated retail market is approximately \$3.4 billion annually (Marsh 1987).

In Utah, off-highway use is an important recreational activity and the users make a substantial contribution to the state and economic growth. This use generates about \$180 million in annual revenue, with over \$15 million being tax revenue for state and local governments (Salt Lake Tribune, 1991). The average household spends \$1,841 for trips and \$5,500 on equipment and maintenance services annually.

The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation identifies OHV use as having a retail value of approximately \$67 million. The average expenditure for an Idaho resident per day is \$35.94.

The Pacific Northwest Outdoor Recreation Survey: 1986/1987, which includes Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, acknowledged that 13% of the households participated in ATV use for 1,128,700 annual activity occasions, where an outing equals one activity occasion (Idaho Department Parks and Recreation, 1990).

Although the retail market for OHV use is immense, the benefits of this use to the rural communities can be difficult to determine. The Piute ATV Trail Committee in Sevier County, Utah is attempting to itemize such benefits, but with many towns as trailheads, this determination has been difficult. However, all information packets for that trail sell out to inquiries nationwide.

There have been several benefits from the Piute ATV Trail. A campground on the Fishlake National Forest, managed by the Fremont Indian State Park, is currently expanding its facility due to tourism increases from people desiring to ride the Piute Trail. Also, small businesses catering to ATV sales, servicing, and touring opportunities have expanded or located in the communities. Regional and national businesses have shown an interest for "retreats" to the area for this recreational opportunity.

Bergstrom (1989), in *Rural Economic Development Impacts of Outdoor Recreation in Georgia*, states that recreation spending stimulates a large amount of economic activity in rural economies.

He measures the economic effects of outdoor recreation on rural economies as direct, indirect, and induced business effects of recreational spending.

$$\begin{array}{lclclcl} \text{TOTAL ECONOMIC EFFECTS} & = & \text{SUM OF} & + & \text{INDIRECT} & + & \text{INDUCED} \\ \text{OF OUTDOOR RECREATION} & & \text{DIRECT} & & \text{EFFECT} & & \text{EFFECT} \\ \text{IN RURAL ECONOMIES} & & \text{EFFECT} & & & & \end{array}$$

The direct and indirect effects account for the first and subsequent rounds of input purchases made in order to support firms which directly provide recreational visitors with goods and services.

Direct effects are the purchases of gasoline, food, and other commodities from local service outlets. The outlets must then buy additional supplies from wholesalers. A group of travelers from California visiting the

Piute Trail spent approximately \$800 for a week on the trail. Purchases and services included: a week at the KOA campground, an emergency root canal by a local dentist, supplies from a local Honda shop, gasoline, restaurant stops, shopping at a local shopping center, and groceries for one week.

The indirect effects provide for increased input purchases made in order to meet the increased demand for goods and services caused by expanded household income in the rural economy. The economic activity stimulated by the multiple-round purchasing are the indirect effects of recreational spending on the rural economy.

The direct and indirect effects of recreational spending result in an overall increase in the production of goods and services in a rural area. This increase could result in increased employment and household income. Increase in household income would then expand consumer goods and service. This economic activity caused by increased consumer purchases is the induced effect of recreational spending.

The above effects do not necessarily contribute to the national economy. However, they do contribute to regional economic development and may meet welfare distribution objectives related to redistribution of income to economically depressed rural areas.

Tourism

In Idaho, 63% of all travelers are non-resident and spend 43% more than residents. This highlights the economic benefits of promoting Idaho to outsiders. Their spending in the state is the basis of tourism as an important invisible export industry. Promoting Idaho to non-residents is crucial for managing the economic return on the state's involvement in travel and tourism promotions (1987 Idaho Leisure Travel and Recreation Study).

The concept of rural tourism is not new. While larger cities have attracted people and concentrated services and accommodations, they have served as starting points for activities in nearby rural communities. Community leaders and economic developers are now embracing rural tourism with new excitement. According to Hunt (1992), tourism represents opportunity for diversifying or complementing many communities' economic base, not by replacing other industries, but by adding a new opportunity to the economic mix. One tourism dollar spent in a small community has much more impact on the economic and personal wealth than one dollar spent in a larger community. Also, Long and Nuckolls (1992), states that tourism development is important to Western rural communities because it can help diversify and stabilize a local community, contribute to its tax base, create jobs and business opportunities, and bring in new money.

Tourism development in any community must be based on a set of objectives which attempt to maximize visitor satisfaction, provide rewards to owners and land managers, preserve and protect natural, historical, and heritage resources, and respect the values and needs of the host population.

III. Methodology

Evaluation meetings and discussions were held with representatives from the Forest Service; the Burley, Elko, and Salt Lake Districts of the Bureau of Land Management, and the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.

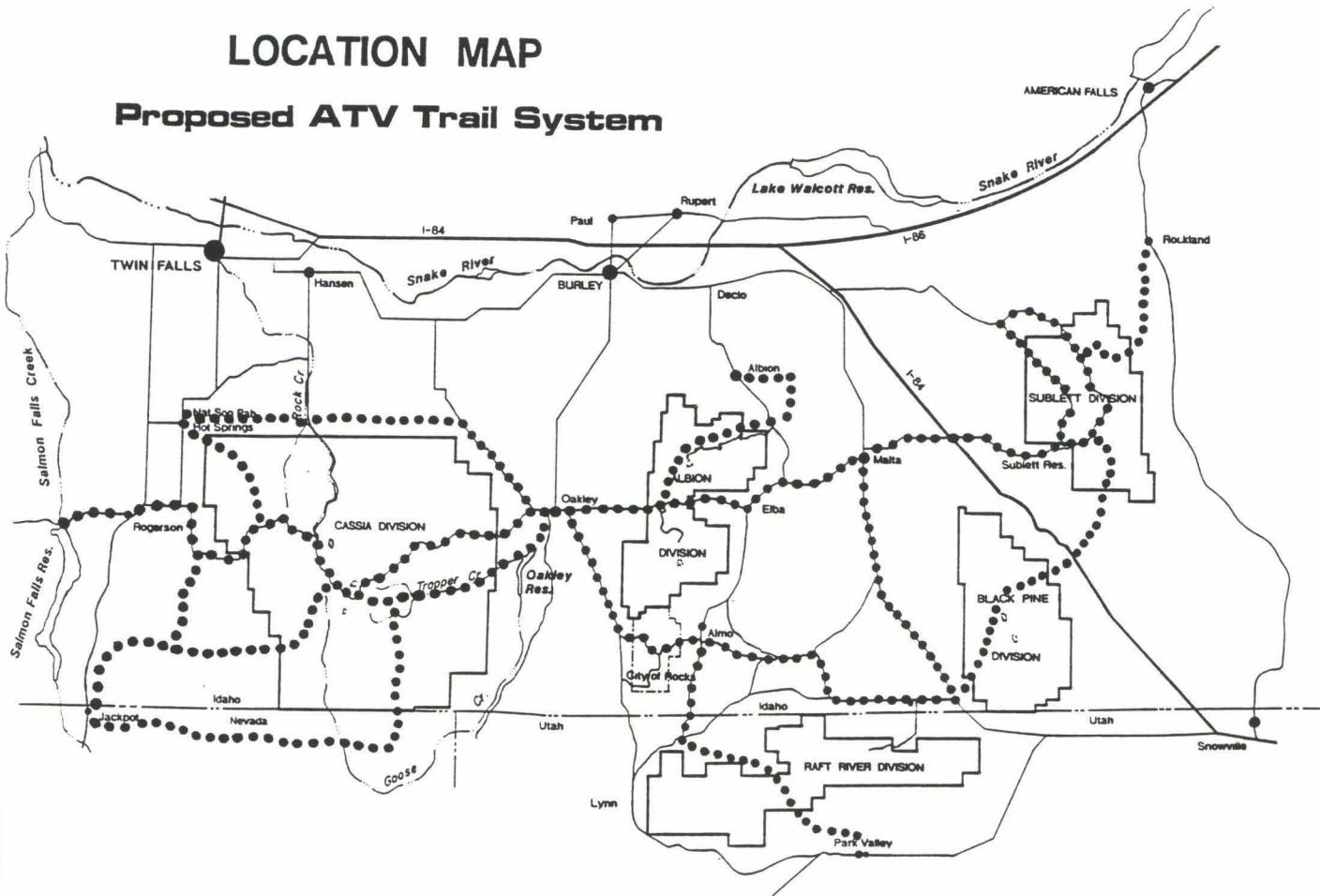
Additional contacts were made with the Twin Falls and Cassia County Commissioners, Idaho State Fish and Game, General Accounting Office representatives, Sawtooth National Forest Recreation Staff, Sevier County (Utah) Economic Development Office, Sevier County Travel Council, Fremont Indian State Park, Region IV (Idaho) Recreation Forum, and various users. Background information was also obtained from various publications.

The local television station aired a story discussing the proposed project and requesting public comment. Inquiries, as a result of this effort, will be used in the project development.

IV. Discussion

- The intent of this paper is to determine if an ATV trail system is feasible and to evaluate its benefit to rural communities.

This trail system is feasible. The land management agencies recognize ATV use as legitimate. Over 400 miles of roads and trails are available to link the communities within the project area into a network which allows residents to access National Forest Lands on approved county roads. A possible trail system is illustrated in Figure 5. Primary access routes are shown, but additional loop trails could be identified which would access points of interest.



(Figure 5)

With the increase in ATV use due to the versatility of the machine, this system could appeal to the local, regional, national, and international tourism industry. This system would provide opportunities for rural communities to increase revenues through increased tourism.

The designation of an ATV system would be a positive step in providing economic, social, and resource benefits to the rural communities and agencies. The following benefits were identified from published research, personal conversations with community leaders and economic developers, county commissioners, travel councils, businesses, state agencies, resource managers, user groups, and individuals.

Economic Benefits

- "Rural Idaho" becomes a Destination Point for local, regional, national, and international tourism.
- The retiring population is able to access the National Forests.
- Businesses establish specializing in ATV sales and service.
- Outfitting and Guide establishment providing ATV touring.
- Expansion of local recreational vehicle (RV) campgrounds.
- Increases in length of stay.
- Increased revenue from increased tourism.
- Ski area sponsored events.
- Incentive for Businesses to sponsor "retreats".

Several towns could sponsor trailheads within the 5,000 square mile project area. As a minimum, the trailhead locations should provide fuel and food. The outlying cities of Burley and Twin Falls, Idaho; Jackpot, Nevada; and Snowville, Utah could provide full service.

The following towns and attractions could sponsor trailheads:

IDAHO	NEVADA	UTAH
Holbrook Nat-Soo Pah Hot Springs and RV Park Rockland Almo Oakley Rogerson Albion Kimberly Hansen Murtaugh *Malta Magic Mountain Ski Resort (Cassia Division) Pomerelle Ski Resort (Albion Division) Salmon Falls Reservoir	*Jackpot	*Snowville Park Valley

*Motels available

Social Benefits

- Family emphasis.
- Ownership by partners.
- Access for people with disabilities.
- Maintenance by the partners.
- Snowmobile and nordic skiing opportunities.
- Agency administrative boundaries disappear and programs are established to benefit the rural communities.
- Road jurisdiction is identified as "open" to public use.
- Multiple recreational settings.
- Heritage resources of the area are identified.
- Retiree benefit.
- Interpretive Service Opportunities.
- Off-highway vehicle education opportunities.
- Recreation therapy.

Resource Benefits

- Directed use.
- Search and rescue advantages.
- Firefighting logistic advantages.
- Law enforcement advantages with federal and state agencies.
- "Showcase" features, landmarks, conservation projects, and heritage resources.
- Draw use away from sensitive areas.
- Partnership opportunities among agencies, states, and communities.
- Close unnecessary side trails.
- Designated ATV trail system.
- State grants for construction, maintenance, and law enforcement.

- Interpretive opportunities.
- Lessen vandalism.
- State funding available for trail system maintenance and compliance.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, an ATV system would be beneficial to local rural economies in southcentral Idaho, northern Utah and northeastern Nevada. The land management agencies have identified motorized use as being a legitimate use of public lands. Over 500,000 acres of land is currently open to motorized use on the Burley and Twin Falls Ranger Districts and surrounding areas with over 400 miles of trails available for this use.

Increased tourism would increase revenue through direct, indirect, and induced recreation spending. Economic, social, and resource benefits would be created for the communities and agencies.

Tourism represents an opportunity for diversifying or complementing many communities' economic base by adding a new opportunity to the economic mix. Tourism development is important to Western rural communities because it can help diversify and stabilize a local community, contribute to its tax base, create jobs and business opportunities, and bring in new money.

It is recommended that the trail system should be completed. Additional work will be needed to complete this project as envisioned. This includes:

- Establishing a Memorandum of Understanding among partners.
- Accomplishing National Environmental Policy Act requirements.
- Identifying ATV routes on public, state, county, and community lands.
- Making presentations to local communities displaying potential benefits.
- Establish those communities who want to participate.
- Preparing final maps with approved trails and trailheads.
- Preparing news releases.
- Establishing a community group that monitors the trail system.
- Developing marketing strategies.
- Developing strategies to measure benefits with assistance from universities, such as Dr. John Hunt from the University of Idaho.

VI. SUMMARY

An All-Terrain Trail System is feasible to local rural economies in southcentral Idaho, northern Utah, and northeastern Nevada. The benefits gained could include revenues through recreational spending. Economic, social, and resource benefits could be created for the communities and land management agencies. This tourism attraction could help diversify communities, contribute to the tax base, create jobs and business opportunities, and bring in new money.

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